R E P O R T R E S U M E S

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEACHING SPACE DIVIDER.

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DESCRIPTORS- *MOVABLE PARTITIONS, *PREFABRICATION, *SPACE DIVIDERS, *TEACHING METHODS, *VERTICAL WORK SURFACES, CHALKBOARDS, CONSTRUCTION COSTS, DISPLAY PANELS, TACKBOARDS,

TYPES OF VERTICAL WORK SURFACES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MODEL TEACHING SPACE DIVIDER ARE DISCUSSED IN THIS REPORT. THIS DESIGN IS BASED ON THE EXPRESSED NEED FOR MORE TACKBOARD AND SHELVING SPACE, AND FOR MOVABLE PARTITIONS. THE MODEL PANELS WHICH SERVE DIRECTLY AS PARTITIONS RATHER THAN BEING OVERLAID ON A PLASTERED SURFACE, INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING FUNCTIONS--(1) SERVING AS UNITS TO DIVIDE SPACE, (2) SERVING AS VERTICAL WORK SURFACES, AND (3) FACILITATING EASY INTERIOR CHANGES. FOUR TYPES OF SURFACE, PREFABRICATED ON A FOUR BY EIGHT FOOT MODULE, INCLUDE--(1) CHALKBOARD PANELS, PROVIDING A LARGE-SCALE WRITING AND DRAWING SURFACE, (2) DOWEL PANELS, PROVIDING SHELF AND EASEL SPACE, (3) TACKBOARDS, PROVIDING A FULL WALL AREA DISPLAY SPACE, AND (4) PERFORATED PANELS, PROVIDING AN ACOUSTIC AND VERSATILE HANGING SURFACE. PANELS ARE MOUNTED DIRECTLY ON STUDS AND MAY BE DEMOUNTED AND INTERCHANGED AS NEEDED. THIS SOLUTION IS ECONOMICAL AND SAVES OFTEN WASTED WALL SPACE. (DM)

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RESEARCH REPORT 1

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEACHING SPACE DIVIDER

THE Teaching Space Divider had its beginning in the teacher's cry for more tackboard and shelving space, and in the administrator's plea for movable partitions. But the real inspiration and stimulation for the development of these units came from a talk on classroom design given by Dr. Charles Bursch of California at a meeting of the National Council on Schoolhouse Construction. Members of our firm had frequently met and informally discussed such topics as the folly of putting up expensive plaster wall surfaces and then partially covering them with chalkboards and tackboards, and the unimaginative waste in building heavy masonry partitions in schools when such partitions must often be moved because of enrollment or curricular changes. But Dr. Bursch's insistence that partitions in classroom wings do more than just divide the wing into cubicles, that they offer vertical work space to help the teaching program, gave the firm's thinking a direction.

At this point it quickly became evident that a wall is more than a wall—it is a teaching device. It is a vertical work surface just as a table is a horizontal work surface. Thus it became apparent that the function of the partition was threefold:

1. To serve as units to divide space.
2. To serve as vertical work surfaces.
3. To facilitate easy interior changes.

The Teaching Space Dividers, as described on the following pages, were developed in an attempt to find versatile, functional wall units which serve the above three functions.

THE PROBLEM:

Must the walls that subdivide a school into classrooms be the traditionally heavy, sometimes load bearing, partitions? Does it make sense to put up expensive wall surfaces such as plaster, then partially cover them with chalkboards and tackboards? Why can't classroom walls be put to work for classroom use?

Here is the experimental model of the Teaching Space Dividers, designed and constructed by the firm prior to the development of the final plans and specifications of these units.

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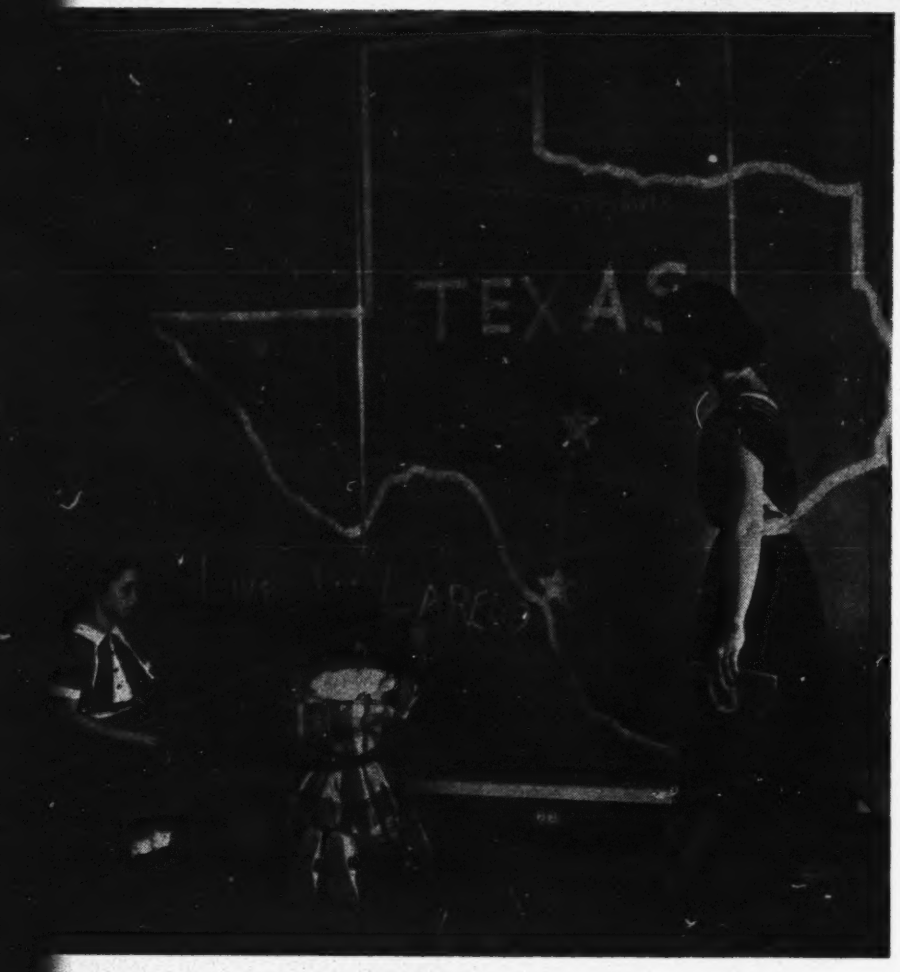
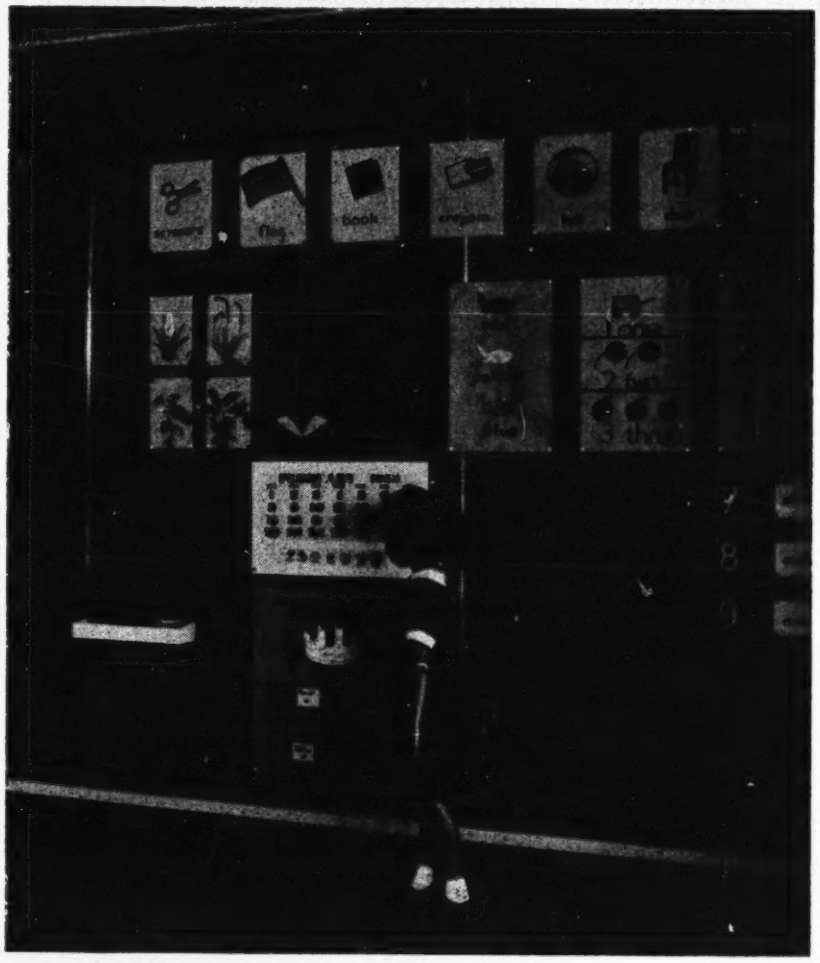


1 CHALKBOARD PANELS

The chalkboard panel, as shown above, one of the four types of units of the Teaching Space Dividers, extends from floor to near ceiling height. Thus it is ample for all predictable purposes and can be used by any size person from any desired position. It is itself a wall covering and not just a teaching device placed on a wall covering. The chalkboard with its plywood backing is applied directly on the studs, thus eliminating the mouldings, chalk rails and the usual finished wall behind the chalkboard. Both the tall teacher and the small pupil can use the board comfortably. The teacher, too, can use the chalkboard while seated in a small demonstration teaching group. The unit, like the other three, is four feet wide and is prefabricated and demountable. This panel is an adaptation of a design by architect Alonzo Harriman.

2 DOWEL PANELS

Here is a photograph of the dowel panel, a Teaching Space Divider unit. In some ways it is like a tinker-toy, a device with which the teacher can build her own shelves for a reference library, construct her own brackets for three dimensional visual aids, and make her own easels. The panel consists of a plywood surface mounted on wood studs. Each panel has insert holes for hard wood dowels. The insert holes have solid backing so that the dowels can hold up heavy objects, a row of reference books, for instance. The panels are equipped with shelving boards, paint trays and drawing boards. The dowel panel is designed so that teachers and pupils can devise their own individual teaching setups. There is no limit to the number of setups when imaginative teachers and students are involved.

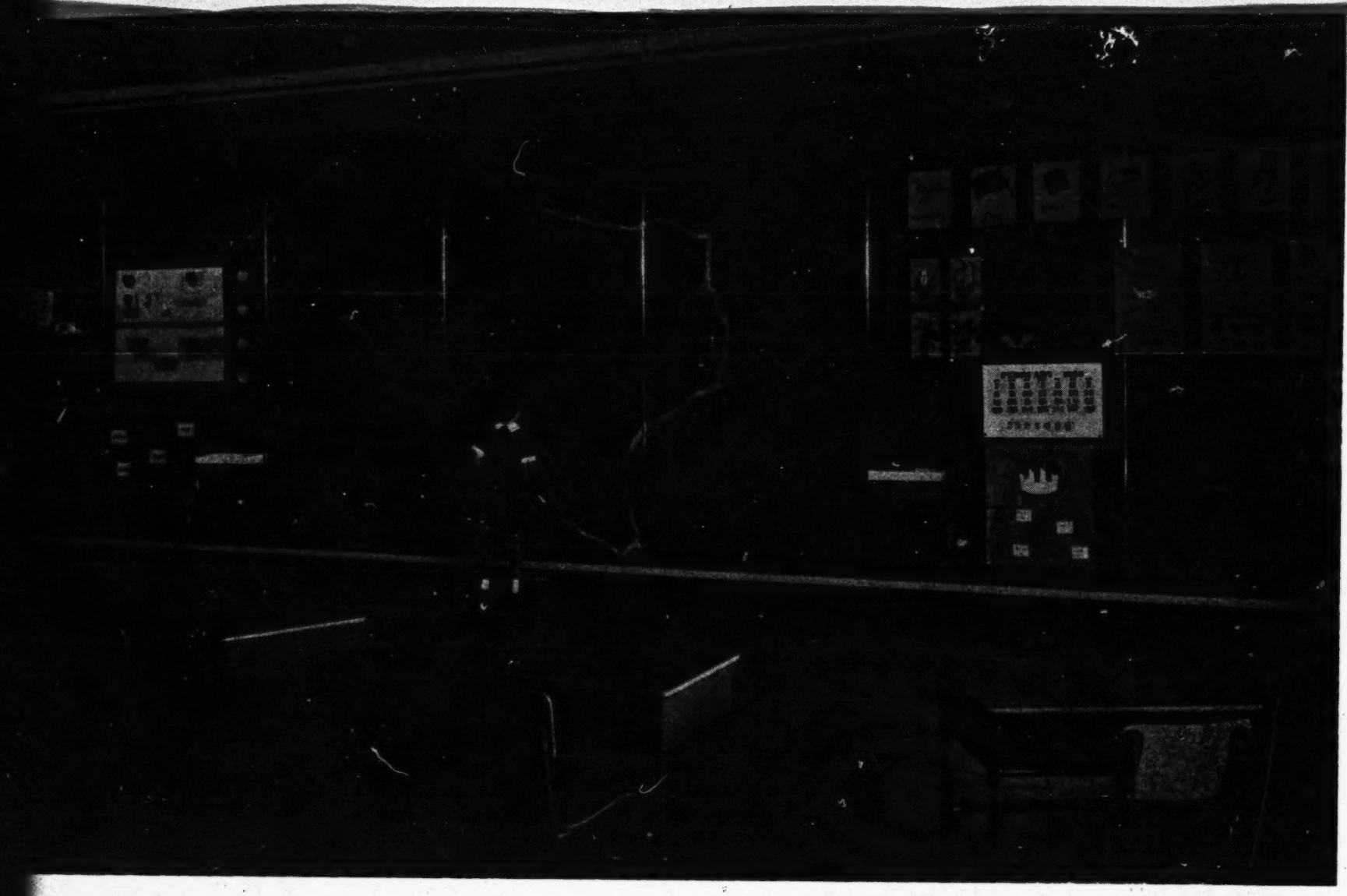


3 TACKBOARD PANELS

Tackboards, mere token scraps in the conventional classroom, are full height panels in the Teaching Space Dividers. They are applied, as are the chalkboards, directly to partition studs. As is shown the tackboard surface is from floor to near ceiling height. Here every square foot of the wall can be used for educational purposes. Here, too, is the answer to the teacher's cry for more tackboard space. This expansive use of tackboard makes the classroom wall a true vertical work surface. Like the other two panels, this one has a four-foot module and is built as a separate unit which can be easily demounted from the wall. It offers many possibilities for displays and visual aid arrangements.

4 PERFORATED PANELS

The fourth basic panel of the Teaching Space Dividers is the perforated panel. This panel, consisting of perforated asbestos-cement board or hard pressed fiberboard, makes an excellent surface on which to secure posters or pictures. There are commercial fittings which can be used on these units for hanging various objects, but ordinary golf tees serve quite satisfactorily. Above is shown the use of small colored pegs which hold up the visual aid material. Acoustical insulation serves as backing for the perforated panel. This fourth basic panel also has a width of four feet, is prefabricated and demountable, and can be interchanged with the other three panels. The perforations add a pleasing texture to the wall.



A Definition of the Teaching Space Dividers

The Teaching Space Dividers, therefore, when arranged together to formulate an interior wall, provide a vertical, all-purpose work and storage surface designed to separate classrooms (as well as any and all other kinds of interior spaces) from one another. The Divider is not a wall though it does the job of the traditional wall it is designed to replace. The Teaching Space Divider bears close relationship to a piece of furniture or equipment which is to be moved in after the building is completed. It is not a system of built-in shelving though it incorporates some of the advantages. It is a vertical plane surface to be used fully, naturally and unconsciously, just as table tops and floors are used as horizontal surfaces on which to conduct educational activities.

Are They Expensive?

But are the Dividers expensive? At this point of their development they have proven quite inexpensive. They were first used in the Laredo, Texas, schools (three new elementary schools and one new junior high school). In order to have a clear-cut cost separation the letting was arranged in such a way that the basic bids did not include the Teaching Space Dividers. In other words, the basic bids concerned the construction of a loft type building without the partitions which separated the classrooms. Bids were based on three schools involving 44 classrooms. Without the Dividers the total construction cost was $582,000. With them it was only $24,000 more—*only 4 percent of the total construction cost for the cost of the Teaching Space Dividers.* This amazing low percentage figure may not hold true for future lettings, but it certainly gives an indication that the Teaching Space Dividers are economical.

What the Future Holds

The Teaching Space Divider is still in the developmental stage, and ideally it always will be. In its present stage of development, its economy and educational versatility recommend it as a distinct advantage over the wasteful, inflexible and inadequate vertical surfaces of yesterday. It is potentially capable of even better performance. For example, it is theoretically possible to install all of these various kinds of panels so that a teacher or janitor could remove and interchange them quickly and easily using only a screwdriver. In this event, the Divider's adaptability would be virtually limitless. Again, if the Teaching Space Divider comes to enjoy a wide application, manufacturers of school furniture and equipment might see fit to design items especially for use in classrooms having this kind of vertical working surface. Whatever lies ahead for the Teaching Space Divider, the firm is pleased to be able to offer it in the interests of further and better use of teaching space.